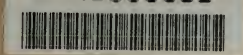


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## DO THYSELF NO HARM.

When an individual is observed to be yielding more and more to the ensnaring power of strong drink, or of profanity, Sabbath-breaking, immorality, and neglect of the great salvation, he replies to any voice of warning: "If I am doing wrong, I am injuring only myself—I do no one else any harm." But even were this true—which it is not; for, such a man by his influence, example and connection with others, is doing serious injury to all around him—he forgets that in doing harm to himself he sins against God and incurs his wrath. God says: "Thou shalt love thyself;" and God also says, "Do thyself no harm."

Now look at the harm you have done yourself already.

1. In regard to your *character*. A most precious gift of God is your reason. Its dictates would have led you to God in sweet obedience and confiding love; but they have not been obeyed. You are a moral being, and capable of noble and delightful emotions toward all holy beings, similar to those that fill the bosom of angels; but all the impulses which would have led you to harmony of feeling and character with God and all the good, have been resisted. Dependent, too, as you have been, on the divine kindness for every blessing, you have yet been a stranger to pious gratitude. The noblest motives that ever invited a rational being into the service of his Maker, have been addressed to you in vain. You may stand fair before the world; but every tie that has bound you to God, has been broken. Can you look on the map of life and point out any spot, and say, "There I sincerely and cordially sought to glorify God?" Men may praise you; but were all the holy beings in the universe to give their decision, you would sink overwhelmed by the unanimous voice of condemnation. Nothing stamps a rational being with such dishonor as sin, and in your case there is not one act of holy obedience to relieve the dark picture.

2. See, too, the harm done your *happiness*. You have been a stranger to the pure and holy joys of God's service. You might have seen the world in which you dwell radiant with the beauty and glory of God, and

might have tasted the sweetest pleasures from the vision, had you not suffered sin to darken and pervert your mind. Your early acceptance of Christ would have opened a fountain of holy joys, and the streams issuing from it would have run along parallel with the whole path of life. But *directly* have you done your happiness harm. You have violated the laws of your moral nature by disobeying God. The wounded flesh does not more certainly insure pain than the wounded spirit. Suffering treads in the footsteps of transgression. You have felt the painful rebukes of a guilty conscience. You have realized an aching void in your soul, which all you have gained of the world has not been able to fill. You may have drank of the sweets of earthly bliss; but they have been often turned to bitter waters by the consciousness that you were starving an immortal mind.

3. See, too, the harm you have done your *usefulness*. Had you followed the first impulse you felt to a life of piety, by yielding your heart to the gospel's first appeal, what a blessed influence you might have shed around you. What salutary rebukes you would have administered to evil-doers, and what joyful and animating encouragement to fellow-disciples. Your example, prayers and labors might have turned many from sin and death. One and another, now departed, might have gone exulting into eternity, praising God for your happy influence over them, and be now waiting to welcome you to the same happy home in heaven.

4. Most of all, consider the peril into which you have brought your soul. Here has been a dreadful desolation. By resisting all the holy and reasonable will of God, you have obliged him to become a consuming fire against you. Look at this awful attitude of his holy government: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Now look at another more terrific still, if possible: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" All the holy universe would approve the instant infliction upon you

of the sentence of eternal banishment from the presence of God. Its immediate execution nothing but sovereign mercy prevents.

Have you not, then, already done yourself harm? Linger now, for a moment, on another point. You are the *sole author* of all this evil. The combined agency of all the wicked in the universe could not have done you this injury, irrespective of your own will. Who but yourself debased your noble powers to the service of sin? What hindered you from exerting the best influence on the best welfare of others, but your love and practice of iniquity? What has robbed you of the joys of holy obedience, but your refusal to obey?

But the harm already done will be greatly *increased by continuance in sin.*

1. In respect to *character*. All the dark hues of guilt will grow darker. Actions dishonorable to you as a rational being, and such is every sin, are rapidly accumulating; and each adds a deeper shade to the already melancholy picture. One sin blasted the honor of the angels that fell, and banished them from heaven. One sin drove our first parents in ignominy from the garden of Eden. If one sin stamps the soul with ignominy, what is done when increasing years of guilt multiply sins by millions? To what a depth, O sinner, are you plunging. You are sinking in the view of God and all holy beings. And to such a point is the matter rapidly hastening, that God, in awful justice, will suffer you to sink where the shame of sin shall be *eternal*.

2. See, too, the increasing harm to *happiness*. Sin is hastening to consume every form of it, like a devouring fire. The last draught from the cup of worldly pleasure will soon be taken, and sin will leave your soul incapable of any other. It has already cut you off from happiness in God, and when the poor joys of this life are over, the cup will be empty forever. There is no destroyer of happiness so terrible as sin. It cuts off the branch and tears up the root, and burns them both together.

3. Go on in unrepented sin, and the spiritual and eternal *welfare of not one human being* will be promoted by your earthly existence. How melancholy the

thought, that you should complete your career on earth under the accusation of having never exerted the smallest direct and holy influence to turn a perishing sinner to God. Persisting in sin will involve you in the guilt of knowing that multitudes around you are in danger of everlasting burnings, and yet leaving them unblest by a single prayer in their behalf, or a single warning of their danger. Useless! Oh, think of it, amid the most exciting motives to do good known anywhere in the creation of God. Useless, that when God has revealed that every sincere effort for man's salvation shall meet a gracious, an eternal reward! Useless, when through Divine grace, you might have turned many to righteousness, and with them have shone "as the stars for ever and ever!"

4. Go on, sinner, and the harm will be fully done in the RUIN OF YOUR SOUL. The danger is not in the fact of past guilt, vast as that guilt has been. Your madness and folly have indeed fired your dwelling, but you need not perish in the flames. The devouring woes of the law's vengeance may be repelled by "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and all your guilt washed away in his atoning blood. No past sin necessarily seals your doom; it is the commission of another, *the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Here is the dreadful peril. "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Let the *benevolence* of this warning touch your heart. Paul's cry to the Phillippian jailer stayed his hand, and saved him from the guilt of self murder.

It is, too, a *timely* warning. Had Paul's voice reached the jailer a moment later, it would have found him weltering in his blood. But it came in time. So does this.

It may be the *last* warning. Think of that. God's patience has been amazing toward you; but it has a boundary. Your rejecting of this warning may be the only drop wanting to fill the cup of iniquity. Oh, that you would heed the appeal, perhaps to be repeated no more, DO THYSELF NO HARM.

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